

SOME ASPECTS OF TOWN PLANNING.

By W. A. SAW, Vice-President of the Town Planning Association of Western Australia.

(Read 19th November, 1918.)

A publication of the Homestead Commission, Massachusetts, United States, America, states that Town Planning means:—

“Conservation of human energy and preservation of life, particularly child life; *not* merely superficial beautification.

Economy, necessity, scientific reality; *not* extravagance, dreams, fads.

Conformity to a definite plan of an orderly development into which improvement will fit as it is needed; *not* immediate execution of the whole plan.

Saving in cost of public improvements by business methods for city business; *not* the surrender of the city to artists with vague schemes for city adornment.

Correlation of the city's activities; *not* wholesale alterations at great expense with no assured financial returns.

Encouragement of commerce and facilitation of business; *not* the interruption of business and commerce.

Preservation of historic buildings with their traditions; *not* the destruction of the old landmarks and city individuality.

The rule of common foresight and prudence; *not* the rule of chance with ruinous expense and debt.

Happiness, convenience, and health to all citizens; *not* merely expensive boulevards and parks available only to the rich.”

Who can say of the vast army of the unemployed how large a portion of the industrially inefficient are so because of lowered physical vitality caused by disadvantageous living conditions? To what extent is the forbidding atmosphere of so many homes an element in the problem of inebriety? Of the burdens which the State is called upon to bear in the support of almshouses for the dependent, hospitals for the sick, asylums for the insane, prisons and reformatories for the criminal, what portion can fairly be attributed to early adverse environment?

What other Countries are doing.

In 1874 Sweden passed an Act in which it was made compulsory that “For every town there shall be prepared a plan for its general arrangements and of the building within it, including the streets, the

markets, and other public places. It shall be adopted by the Town Council, and finally submitted to the King for his approval or rejection.

In Italy it is compulsory that every town of 10,000 inhabitants *must* have its town-planning scheme.

In England, France, Italy, United States, Sweden, Canada, Nova Scotia, and Germany, town-planning has been in force for years. Even during the war England has spent many millions and has other large schemes in hand. In London the architects, engineers, surveyors, and city officials are working on a comprehensive plan covering housing and traffic routes over an area of 2,000 square miles round London. In France, the Senate have passed a law which provides that every city, town, or village in France, regardless of whether it is in the destroyed area or not, will be forced to lay its future developments according to modern city planning principles.

Belgium has appointed a board of town-planners to deal with the existing, as well as the ruined, towns.

Australia must awake and keep up to the other nations of the world in the march of progress. We cannot afford to lag behind them.

It must not be forgotten also that, *now the war is over*, some 30,000 soldiers, strong, able-bodied, virile, vigorous men, the best of our race, will return to Western Australia, and while we hope that many will take up rural occupations, yet it is almost certain that the majority of them will settle in towns and suburbs. This means more rapid development than heretofore. Are we therefore to let the present happy-go-lucky style of expansion go on, and add to our present difficulties? Let us be wise and plan in advance of settlement.

City Beautiful.

This is a term we are constantly hearing, mostly in terms of levity, or sarcasm, but it is possible that those who use the term do not know what it means, and have a very poor conception of what town-planners are aiming at.

We are not theorists and idealists. Town planning involves essentially practical considerations. Its bearing on public health should be sufficient to ensure for it the attention it deserves in a country which recognises the value both of population and the efficiency of the individual units.

We see in Australia, this "glorious land of open spaces," our large cities congested with physically crushed and mentally warped men and women.

We note the squalid environment, breeding crime and disease. We watch death stalking through the slums, and marking down the defenceless child, passing it out without even a fighting chance. In this "land of magnificent distances" Sydney has an infant death

rate of 11.7 per cent. We in Australia are so crushing our houses together that the death rate of our children is greater than that of London, where 9 per cent. go out in their first year. Yet with proper city planning as at Port Sunlight, England, the death rate can be lowered to 3 per cent. Some years ago this State had the highest infant death rate, under one year, in the Commonwealth, at one time over 14 per cent., but during 1916, 1917, and 1918 it is probably the lowest in the Commonwealth, being slightly over 6 per cent. of the births, or 60.5 per 1,000 births. Under 5 years the deaths averaged $23\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the whole deaths. The total death rate is 9.3 per 1,000 of the population.

We must do better than we have done in conserving our baby life by taking greater care of the mothers of the nation. We can augment our man power best by improving the workmen's homes, by beautifying them individually, and in the mass, by preserving the sanctity of the home and keeping the flag "one family, one house" flying by abolishing overcrowding; by getting the factories and the workers out into the environs of the city by rapid communication services to zones where land is cheaper, where air is pure, and where the children, in their garden villages, will grow up taller, stronger, deeper in the chest, freer from physical defects, happier, more likely to be stalwart effectives in the wealth-creating forces of the State, and less likely to be a burden on the community. We wish to look ahead, and plan for the future as well as the present, to save piling up an unnecessary burden on the next generation, which, in many cases, we can now prevent without cost to ourselves.

We wish to seize the opportunity when it presents itself, as our means allow, and at the lowest possible cost, to rectify some of the many mistakes made in the past, which, if not dealt with, will become more accentuated as time goes on. Unimproved land costs less to purchase than improved land.

London Conference.

Now, in 1910 a Town Planning Conference was held in London, and there were present 368 delegates from 214 Corporations, Councils, and Societies from all parts of the world.

The Right Hon. John Burns, M.P., was the President and welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Prime Minister and His Majesty's Government. Mr. Burns was the author of the English Housing and Town Planning Act which was passed by Parliament in the year 1909. I quote a few extracts from his address to the delegates:—

"Environment has a wonderful effect on character. It is not an accident that the beautiful manor house, the restful vicarage, the stately homes of England, and the beautiful public schools and colleges have turned out the Ruskins, the Kingsleys, the Morrisses, the Nelsons, the Newtons and the Darwins.

Cities are not only emporiums for goods, centres of commerce and trade. They are something more than a mere cash nexus: they are places where utility, comfort, and beauty can be and ought to be combined, so that the passer by can, from what he sees, feel something to which his sense of beauty and of domestic comfort can respond all the better for having lived in and seen beautiful buildings every day of his life; places which by their beauty, their amenity, their grace, and, above all, their greenery, create a joy in life which we Britons sometimes lack, and give a spacious leisure in idle moments, when study wants a respite, and honest labour requires a pleasant rest.

The people of our poorer towns suffer not only from lack of means, they suffer from poverty of spirit. Their dismal temper is often caused by their squalid environment. Every day we see children's characters spoiled, their natures stunted by the depressing circumstances in which they live.

Spoiled lives in the soiled homes, in the slatternly streets, are often causes of dirt, drink, degradation, loafing, and dependence in many of our big cities. When a slum vanishes, a brewery falls and public houses disappear. The mean street produces the mean men, the lean and tired woman, and the unclean children.

So long as casual labour broods in squalid lairs, in sunless streets, and ugly dwellings are its only habitation, we shall continue to turn out nervous mannikins instead of enduring men.

Motherhood, childhood, youth, society, and the race demand the demolition of the soul-destroying slum. They ask for the pleasant town, the comfortable yet dignified city.

The artisan is now securing houses at rents and of a character and beauty that were not within the reach of the average artisan 25 years ago. But, we have to think of those lower than the artisan; we have to think of the great mass of mankind, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, the skilled, the unskilled, and, above all, the casual labourer; and the responsibility rests upon us in house and town planning to see that the labourer is provided with infinitely better housing and street accommodation than he now secures.

The expanding village wants town planning as much as does the large city; the growing town clamours for town planning; but, most of all, the straggling suburb round the ever-changing city gives a stimulus whose call we ought to have answered years ago. For all these reasons—industrial, social, commercial, and imperial—town planning must go hand in hand with better housing, higher wages, and increasing sobriety."

United States and Canada.

Now, many people in Western Australia consider that town planning is a fad, not worth wasting time over, but the people of the United States and Canada are recognised even by our critics as

being smart, cute, and up-to-date. They know and have proved that it is a money-saving proposition. Listen to what Mr. Daniel H. Burnham, Chairman of the Committee of Fine Arts, U.S.A., and the creator of the Chicago Exposition, said at the London Conference in 1910:—

“The inception of great planning of public buildings and grounds in the United States was in the World’s Fair in Chicago, 1890. The beauty of its arrangement and of its buildings made a profound impression, not merely upon the highly educated part of the community, but still more perhaps upon the masses, and this impression has been a lasting one. As a first result of the object-lesson, the Government took up the torch and proceeded to make a comprehensive plan for the future development of the Capitol, Washington. This action was less than ten years ago, up to which time there never had been a Plan Commission in the United States, but since then every considerable town in that country has gone into this study, and there are many hundreds of Plan Commissions at work at the present time throughout the land. Is this a fad, an attractive occupation of the moment, an interest which will dissipate and pass away? Is it a mere plaything, or does it mirror urgent needs, never before felt, but now becoming essential to humanity? A review of some of the organisations may help to determine the reality of purpose with which men have now gone into this work. The Washington Designing Board was appointed by the Government, the last President of the United States, and, still more, the present one are at the back of it, and the Congress has passed an Act establishing a National Fine Arts Commission as an outcome of their efforts.

Then came the plan of Manila, capital of the Philippines, made under Mr. Taft, who was then Secretary for War, the initiative having come from him personally.

Then came Cleveland, Ohio, which State passed a special law in order to allow large towns to employ expert commissioners, who are to design the public thoroughfares and parks, and who are to act as censors in all public art matters.

Then came San Francisco, where an association of private men undertook to back the work. And then came Chicago, where the work was undertaken by the Commercial Club, which appointed a committee of 15 of its members to conduct the enterprise.

Other places have done the same earnest work, and have shown the same liberal spirit as those mentioned above. But the most significant aspect of this new phase of life in the United States lies in the kind of men who are actively engaged. They are the best and the strongest men of affairs we have. In Chicago, in three years, there were 200 meetings of the General Committee, at which hundreds of public men—engineers, architects, sanitary, railroad, city transportation, and other experts—were present. There is not one

man of the 15 committee men who is not at the head of some great business, and who is not loaded with the heaviest kind of responsibilities of his own, and yet they all make it a point of honour to be in their seats when the chairman calls to order, and not for a week or two, or a month or two, but most faithfully through years, and it is everywhere the same.

The town planning men in every city are the ablest in the community, and each one feels that he has no duty more serious or more important; and it may be of interest to Englishmen to know that, just as I was leaving Home a month ago (this was in 1910), Sir William Horn, Chairman of the Board of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, wrote to me from Montreal to say that he had taken the chairmanship of a Plan Commission and desired to consult me about an organisation for the development of that city. There you have one of the three or four first men in Canada, deliberately arranging to give his heart and hand to the kind of work we are talking about.

There are many more instances, well worth mention, all going to show that town planning is not in the hands of people who have time to waste, but you do not need any more proof. You know well that the deep interest taken in the subject throughout the world marks, not a passing fancy, but a definite step in the development of man.

Australia.

And now what is Australia doing? Neither in peace or war do we lag behind others, but rather do we strive to be in the lead.

In 1917 a Town Planning Conference was held in Adelaide at which there were 291 delegates from all parts of the Commonwealth except W.A. (Owing to the great strike and lack of transport we were unable to send delegates.) In 1918 another conference was held in Brisbane at which there were 542 delegates, but only four were from this State. There were present Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, Heads of Government Departments of all the States except Western Australia, Lord Mayors, Mayors and Aldermen, Representatives of Statutory Bodies, such as Harbour Trusts, Universities, Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage, Town Planning Associations, numerous Local Government Bodies, such as Cities, Towns and Shires Councils. Other bodies such as Institutions of Civil Engineers, Surveyors, Architects, Board of Control of the Soldiers' Garden Village, New South Wales, Master Builders, Health Society, Women's Horticultural and Home Industries Society, National Council of Women, Municipal Engineers, Chambers of Commerce and Manufactures, Editors of Daily Papers, Automobile Club, Labour Council, Women's Club, Federal Institute of Accountants, Historical Society, Horticultural Society, Pharma-

ceutical Society, Employers' Federation, Returned Sailors and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia, Royal Geographical Society of Queensland, School for Mothers, Botanic Gardens Board, Wattle Day League, the Society of Architects, London, and the following Associations:—British Medical, Art Gallery, Journalists, Australian Natives, Trained Nurses, Traders, Timber Merchants, Children's Playground, Master Carriers, National Agricultural and Industrial, Law, Nurserymen's and Workers' Educational.

This list gives us some idea of the way in which Town Planning is engaging the attention of the public in the other States of Australia.

There are now two Town Planning Ministers, one in New South Wales, Hon. J. D. Fitzgerald; and the other in South Australia, Hon. H. W. Barwell. They each intend to place before Parliament a Town Planning Bill, and it will be interesting to see which State will have the honour of passing the first Town Planning Act in Australia.

Let me tell you of some of the things that have been done in Western Australia which could not have happened had there been a Town Planning Act in force, administered by experts:—

Slums.—We have slums in Perth and Fremantle. In East Perth there are 11 houses on one allotment of half an acre, some fronting a narrow lane only 20 feet in width.

In West Perth land is subdivided and built upon with an area of 10 perches. This equals 16 houses to the acre.

In Leederville there are lots with about 16 to 20 feet frontage and small depth. They are built upon, one room in width and no land at the side.

North of Victoria Park Station there are lots so small that 20 are required to make one acre.

In the whole of the Metropolitan Area from Midland Junction to Fremantle, it was a common thing for the owner of land to have it subdivided as he pleased, without supervision and without reference to what the next owner had done or intended to do; the consequence is that many roads end in a *cul-de-sac*, and do not connect with one another. These mistakes can never be wholly rectified, and will cost a very large sum of money to undo some of the mischief. We have wedge-shaped corners of streets, making them unsightly and dangerous to traffic. In districts subdivided by private owners sufficient open spaces have not been reserved for parks, recreation grounds and children's playgrounds. Claremont has only 1.3 per cent., Perth Road Board, including Mt. Lawley, less than 1 per cent., Bayswater a trifle over 1 per cent., Belmont Park Road Board $\frac{1}{3}$ of 1 per cent. Town Planners advocate about 10 per cent. To give an idea as to what it has cost Perth up to the present, although it

is well provided with parks and open spaces—but they were unevenly distributed—the following is the expenditure:—

	£	s.	d.
Purchasing land for Parks and Gardens	37,000	0	0
Opening out Blind Streets—Extension and Widening	38,563	0	0
Rounding off Street Corners	1,192	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£76,775	0	0
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Costs the Ratepayers at 5 per cent. each day of the year	10	10	0
Per year	3,837	15	0

This is only the beginning. We and our children will have to pay in Perth alone many tens of thousands of pounds in trying to undo the errors of the past. Then what will it cost the other towns and suburbs in this large State of Western Australia? Hundreds of thousands, possibly millions.

To prove this let us take Sydney's and Melbourne's experience—

Rounding off Street Corners.

A few years ago the Sydney Council bought 5½ square yards of a corner at the intersection of George and King Streets for which they paid £1,500. The whole block of land was purchased in 1823 for £63.

Through the action of the Town Planning Association of Western Australia, the local authorities are making it compulsory in new subdivisions to round off the corners of new streets and the Surveyor General has agreed to adopt the same procedure in new towns and suburbs. This alone will save the next generation many thousands of pounds, and at no cost to ourselves.

Sydney and Melbourne—Slums and Housing.

The Sydney Council have during the past 12 years made 83 resumptions to get rid of slums and to widen streets. Up to 1917 the total sum paid was £2,304,047, and other resumptions have since been made and there will be many more. This is not all loss; it may be recovered at the end of 50 years when building leases fall in and through the resale of some of the land. Slum houses were being knocked down when I was in Sydney last August, but what has been done is only the beginning.

Melbourne spent £100,000 to resume undesirable areas, but that sum only purchased two overcrowded blocks of land, and the authorities are undecided as to what to do further owing to the prohibitive cost.

The subject of Housing is a serious problem in Sydney and Melbourne and disgraceful conditions exist there. Both cities are overcrowded. The recent report of the Housing Commission which has been collecting evidence in Melbourne is a very disturbing document. It says: "In Fitzroy, a husband, his wife and three children were found living in one room. In South Melbourne, in a house of three rooms, three families were huddled. Two families, totalling eight persons, were discovered in a three-roomed house in Port Melbourne. In St. Kilda, a fashionable suburb, a bedroom 10ft. x 10ft., and with damp walls, accommodated a man, his wife, and four children."

In Sydney, Mr. A. B. Piddington (Chairman of the Interstate Commission), who is inquiring into house rents, said: "I visited without previous announcement a number of houses in the eastern suburbs of the city in order to see for myself the nature of the dwellings which a large number of people occupy. The rooms in many of the houses were small and low, and the floors rat-eaten. The back yards at almost all of the houses, on an average, would not be more than about 10ft. x 10ft. Speaking generally, I formed the conclusion that a great many of the dwellings in that portion of the city are just about on the same level as the slum dwellings which I was shown in South London."

The Prince of Wales paid a visit recently to Southwark in order to investigate the housing conditions of the poor. The Mayor asked the Prince what he thought of them. "It is damnable," he said.

The same thing will happen here if we do not take steps to prevent it. The Workers' Homes Board have done good work with the funds that were available, and the proposed housing of soldiers will assist. This latter scheme is most liberal. Up to £700 will be advanced to each approved applicant and the interest will be only 5 per cent. Thirty-seven years will be allowed for repayments when a stone house is erected, and a shorter time if of less enduring material, viz., 20 years for a wooden house.

Children's Playgrounds.

It is gratifying to know that some ladies are interesting themselves in the Children's Playground at Lake Street in Perth. The Town Planning Association has appointed some of its members to advise as to the lay-out. Children's playgrounds are of recent origin, but many cities are providing them. The idea is that no house should be more than half-a-mile from the playground. There is a Children's Playground Association of Queensland, and Miss Bedford, the Hon. Secretary, stated that: "In the Brisbane City Area there are approximately 9,000 children between the ages of three and 16 totally unprovided for as regards play centres, and, in the Metropolitan Area, taking a 10-mile radius, there are as many as 48,849 equally unfortunate, with the exception of one district."

Last year I was present at the opening of a Children's Playground at Ithaca, a suburb of Brisbane. The Ithaca Council allocated £120 for the equipment of the playground, and everything has been provided to make for the happiness of the children. At the higher end of the ground there are two buildings, one a crèche and the other a kindergarten school. They are in charge of two nurses. At the lower end there is an open air municipal bath. The playground is divided into different sections for boys, girls and infants, and is well equipped with swings, ladders, climbing poles, roundabouts, slides, wading pool, and other appliances.

One of the nurses said she had appointed 22 boys as policemen to look after the grounds and to protect the apparatus supplied for the games.

At Port Pirie, South Australia, on August 17th, 1918, a playground with its buildings, shelters, appliances, carriage drives, footpaths, plantations and playing areas was erected and completed in one day. Over 2,000 employees of the Broken Hill Associated Smelters gave their services free to do the work.

The company provided the means, and the Corporation the site. What a lot of good work can be done by co-operation and unity of purpose!

The Town Planners of this State are encouraged by the work of others in all parts of the civilised world. We have pressed steadily on during the past three years, turning neither to the right nor to the left, ever onward, determined to reach the goal we have in view, viz., the passing of a Town Planning Act.

We are endeavouring to enlist the sympathy and assistance of the Government, Members of Parliament, Local Authorities, Societies, Institutions, Associations, Leagues, Trades Hall, business men and the general public, so that they all may be interested in Town Planning and thus benefit themselves and those who come after them.

Let each one endeavour to do his or her part as the opportunity occurs, for if we do not leave a better heritage to our children than that which we received from those who have "gone before," we shall have neglected our duty and betrayed our trust.

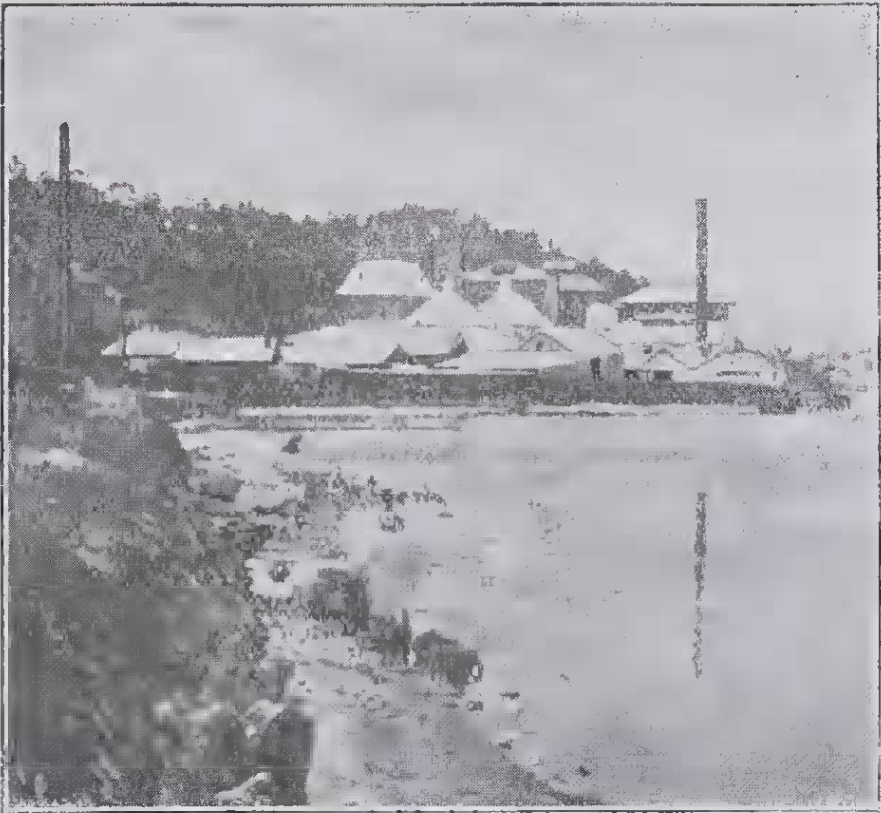


Fig. 1.

A factory between the Swan River and the King's Park, Perth. Out of keeping with its surroundings, and causing a dangerous bottle-neck on the main road. Factories should only be allowed in selected areas.



Fig. 2.

Vista pleasing to the eye. Situated at the eastern end of Murray Street, Perth.



Fig. 3.

Vista in William Street, Perth. Tower erected by Railway Department, with side of tank used for an advertisement of whisky.



Fig. 4.

Slums in Perth.



Fig. 5.

Slums in Sydney. Fifty houses to the acre.

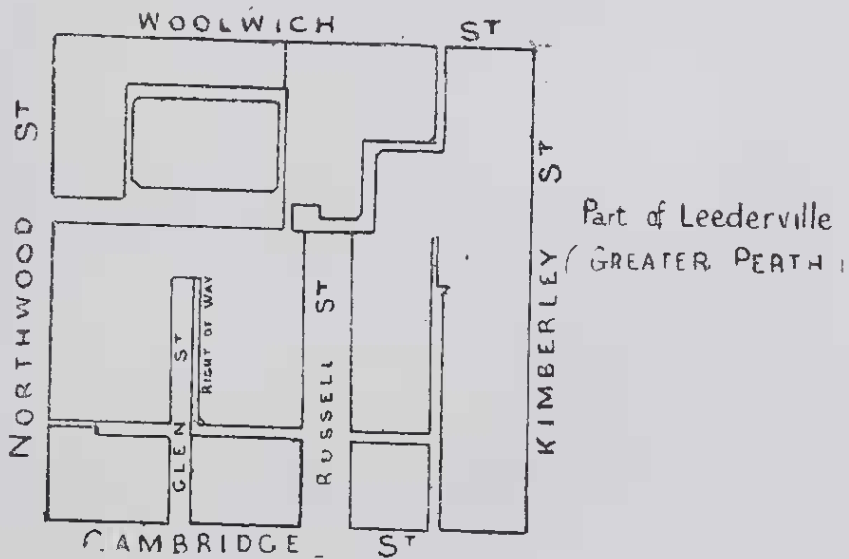


Fig. 6.

Streets in Leederville, Perth, set out without supervision. (What will it cost to rectify this error?)

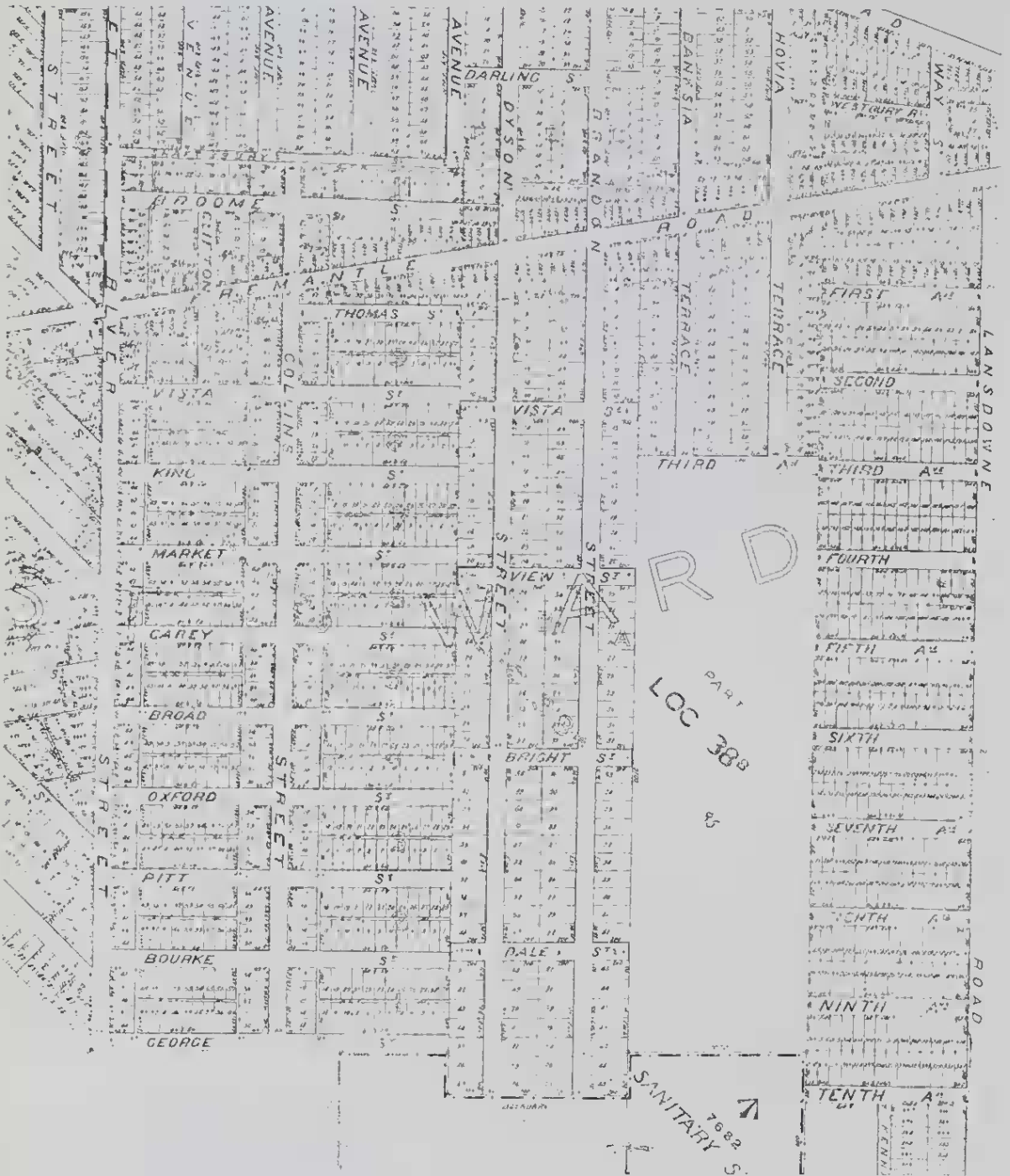


Fig. 7.

South Perth. Subdivision of two estates. Note the position of the streets, many have blind ends.



Fig. 10.

Wasting time and money at a level crossing in East Perth. This obstruction to traffic has existed for 28 years.



Fig. 11.

Perth Railway Station and approach. Insufficient space for future needs. The Railway Station is the entrance gate to the city, and the volume of traffic demands a broad open space leading to which, wide radial thoroughfares should converge.



Fig. 12.

Union Railway Station—Washington, U.S.A.
(Note the area reserved for future requirements.)

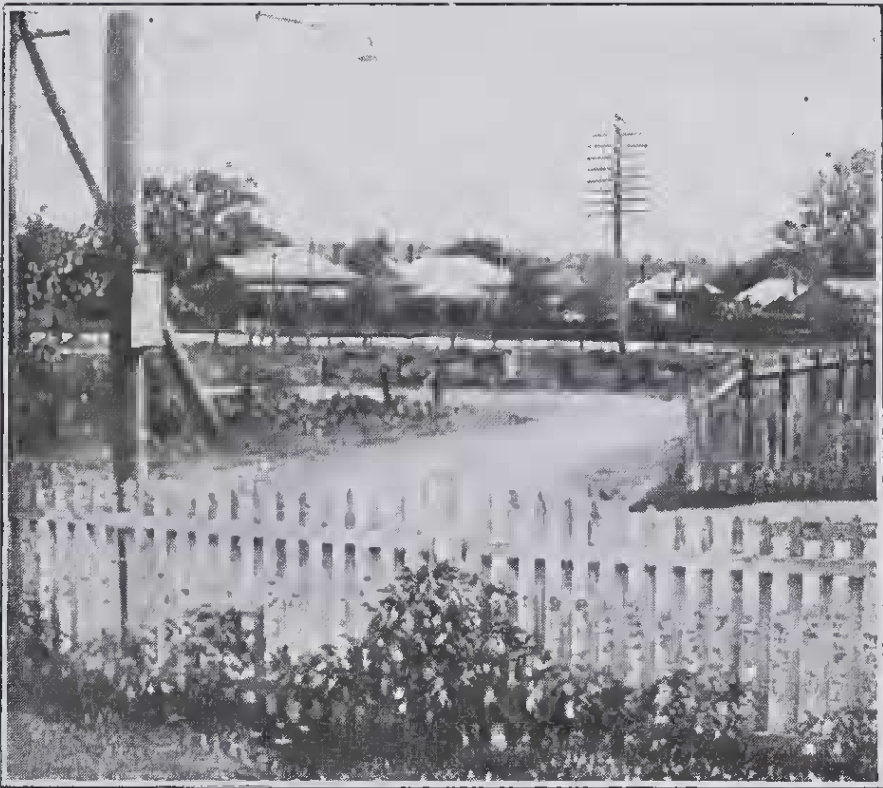


Fig. 13.

Two very dangerous corners at Claremont, W.A.
(This will have to be rectified some day at the public expense.)



Fig. 14.

A 66 feet wide residential street in the metropolitan area. Expensive to maintain, ugly and dusty, and unnecessarily wide for the limited traffic.



Fig. 15.

A 20 feet residential street in a Garden City in England. The houses are set back on a building line. This is a better road than that showing in the preceding figure, costs less to construct and to maintain, and could be widened if necessity arose without compensation being paid to the landowners.



Fig. 16.

Aldwych, London. Shows rounded corners, which facilitate movement of traffic and have a fine effect.



Fig. 17.

Orl Street, Perth, showing the mutilation of trees due to poles and wires being erected in the wrong position.

PERCENTAGE OF PARK AREA TO CITY AREA

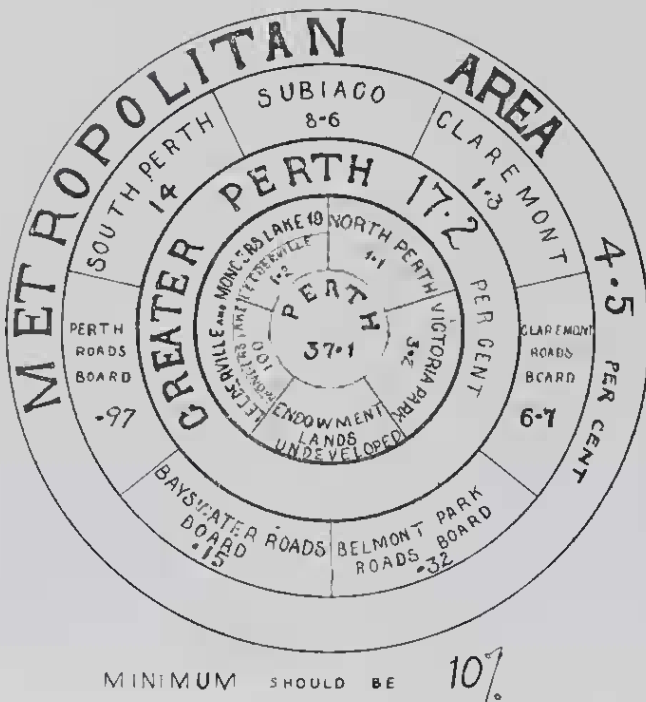


Fig. 18.

Percentage of park area to city area. The districts showing the smallest are those which have been subdivided by private owners.

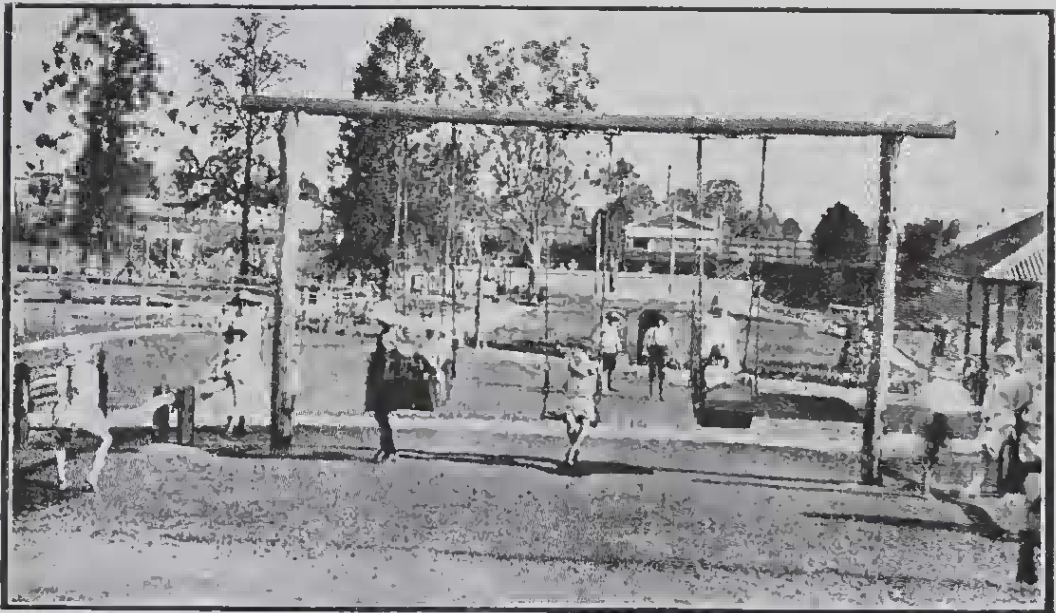


Fig. 19.

A children's playground, Ithaca, Brisbane. Many cities are now providing such playgrounds. Their promoters urge that no home should be more than half a mile from a playground.



Fig. 20.

Western Australian Worker's Home (leasehold). Three rooms and kitchen. Cost £410. Rent 12s. 6d. a week. 246 such houses have been built.



Fig. 21.

Western Australian Worker's Home (freehold). Cost and repayments not available. There are about 1,100 freehold estates on which houses have been erected. The Board has advanced over £500,000 for building houses. (The freehold system has proved more popular than the leasehold.)



Fig. 22.

North Terrace, Adelaide. Showing the treatment of a street too wide for present traffic. Note the Park Ring in the distance. The land cost under £3,000, and is said to be now worth several million pounds.

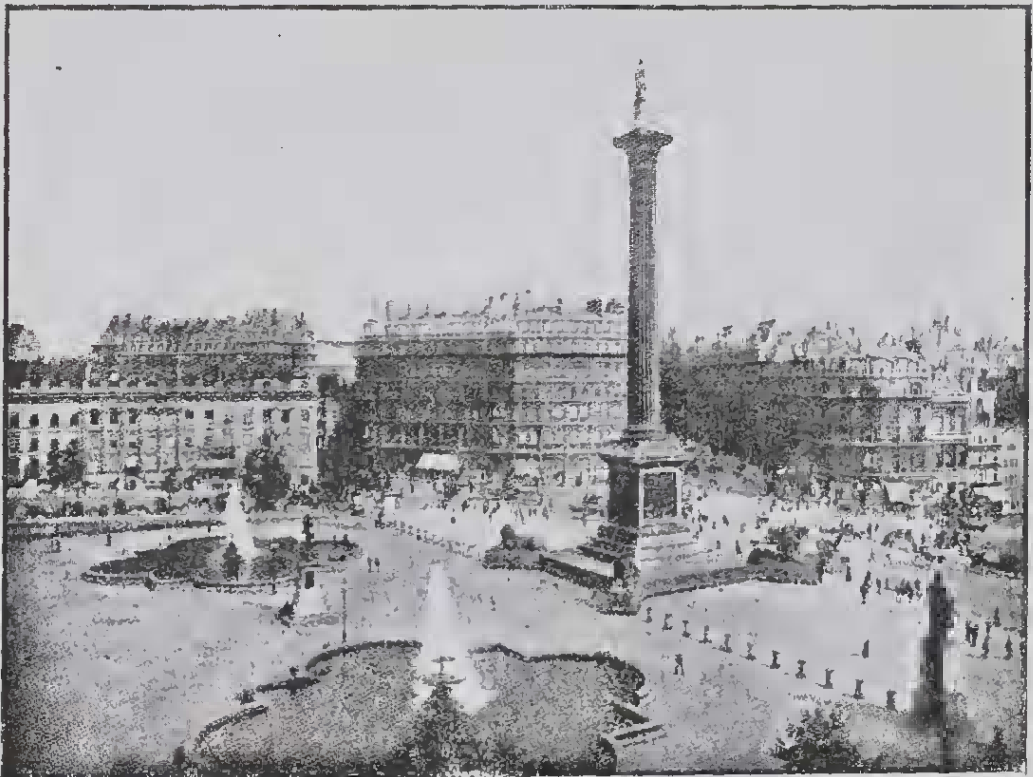


Fig. 23.

Trafalgar Square, London. Showing some of the streets radiating from this fine open space.

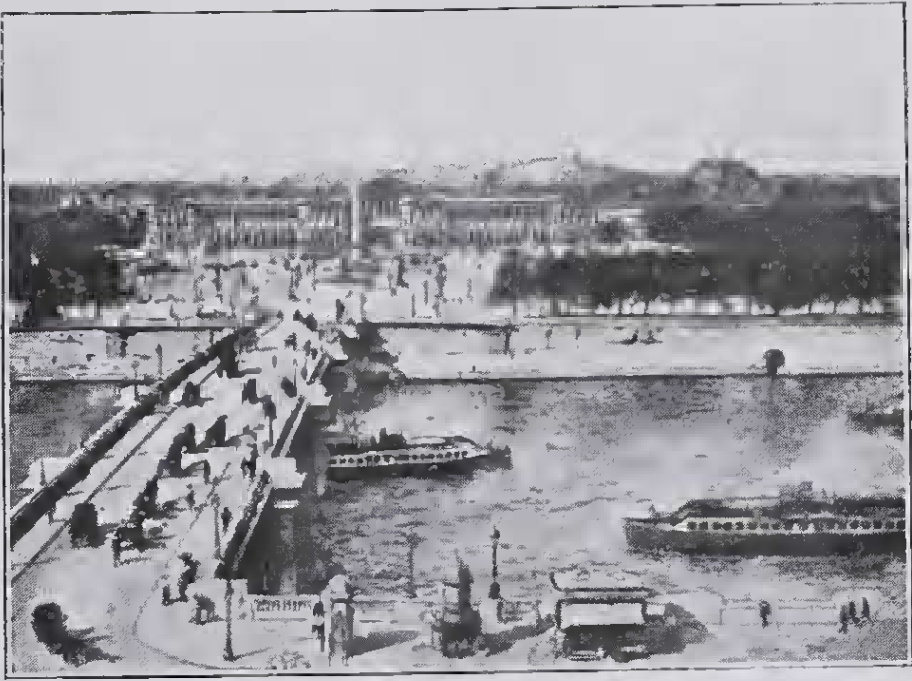


Fig. 24.

Place de la Concorde, Paris. The finest open place in any European city. (Foreign armies have encamped on this place on three occasions. The Germans were there in 1870, and intended to be there again in 1914.)

(Note.—Only a few of the pictures shown by Mr. Saw are here reproduced.)